

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SCCT-01 SAM-01

ACDA-07 ACDE-00 AID-05 SAB-01 SSM-03 A-01 OPR-02 SY-05

OC-05 CCO-00 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 /125 W

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O R 111344Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9999

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ATHENS IMMEDIATE

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

CIA WASHDC

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER IMMEDIATE

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK

COMSIXTHFLT

CTF SIX ZERO

CTF SIX ONE

CTF SIX TWO

CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO

FOSIF ROTA SPAIN

FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 4206

ROME FOR AMBASSADOR MELOY

STUTTGART FOR ELG

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION 11 MAY 1976: PRESENT QUIET INTERLUDE

FOCUSES ATTENTION ON POLITICAL PROCESS

REF: BEIRUT 4140 (O R 101040Z MAY 76)

1. EARLY INDICATIONS ARE THAT PRESIDENT-ELECT SARKIS IS MOVING QUICKLY TO ATTEMPT FENCEMENDING OPERATION WITH DISCONSOLATE JUMBLATT. IT HAS BECOME PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE THAT TELEPHONE CONTACTS BETWEEN THE TWO HAVE OCCURRED AND 10 MAY SEVERAL DEPUTIES CLOSE TO JUMBLATT (TEHINI, ABD AN NOUR AND BAHIGE TAKIEDDINE) VISITED SARKIS AT HIS CARLTON HOTEL HEADQUARTERS. IT IS WIDELY ASSUMED THAT THESE EMISSARIES ARE THE VISIBLE PORTION OF A MUCH MORE EXTENSIVE RECONCILIATION EFFORT. SOME OBSERVERS ARE DRAWING ENCOURAGEMENT FROM THE FACT THAT, FOR ALL HIS CONTINUING UNHAPPINESS, JUMBLATT HAS REFREINED THUS FAR IN HIS PUBLIC STATEMENTS FROM ATTACKING SARKIS PERSONALLY. JUMBLATT AND HIS "PROGRESSIVE" ALLIES MET 10 MAY TO DISCUSS POLITICAL SITUATION AND, ACCORDING TO SOME SOURCES, DECIDED NOT RPT NOT TO TAKE DECISION ON FURTHER STEPS TO IMPLEMENT THEIR DECLARED OPPOSITION TO SYRIAN ROLE IN ELECTION OF SARKIS. THEY ARE SCHEDULED TO BE CONVENED ONCE MORE EVENING 11 MAY, BUT JUMBLATT APPEARS TO BE HOLDING HIS OPTIONS OPEN, PROBABLY AGAINST THE POSSIBILITY THAT HE AND SARKIS CAN REACH MUTUALLY-AGREEABLE FORMULA.

2. AMONG OTHER PROMINENT VISITORS TO SARKIS SUITE AT CARLTON OVER LAST SEVERAL DAYS HAVE BEEN NUMBER OF RETIRED AND ACTIVE ARMY OFFICERS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE APPARATUS OF FORMER PRESIDENT FUAD CHEHAB.EYEWITNESSES AT HOTEL REPORT THAT MEMBERS OF THIS GROUP, HEADED AT THIS TIME BY SAMI AL KHATIB, ARE RECEIVING PREFERRED TREATMENT. FIRST CONCRETE RESULT OF EFFORT TO PUT OLD MACHINE BACK TOGETHER AGAIN MAY BE TERMINATION 11 MAY OF THREE-DAY-OLD GENERAL STIKE IN SIDON. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT SAMI AL KHATIB (NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH HIS DISTANT COUSIN CONFIDENTIAL

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AHMED AL KHATIB, COMMANDER OF THE DISSIDENT LEBANESE ARAB ARMY) PERSONALLY CONTACTED SIDONIAN NASSERITE LEADER, MUSTAFA SAAD, AND TOLD HIM TO COOL IT. WE CANNOT CONFIRM THIS REPORT, BUT IF THERE IS EVIDENCE NEEDED THAT SARKIS HARKS BACK TO THE "GOLDEN DAYS" OF THE CHEHAB REGIME, IT MAY BE PROVIDED LATER TODAY WHEN, WE UNDERSTAND, SARKIS WILL MAKE PILGRIMAGE TO CHEHAB TOMB IN JOUNIEH AND CALL UPON FORMER PRESIDENT'S WIDOW.

3. SARKIS HAS ALSO PICKED UP AN IMPORATANT ENDORSEMENT FROM SUNNI MUSLIM GRAND MUFTI, SHEKH HASSAN KHALED, WHO EXPRESSED HPE THAT NEW PRESIDENT WILL HAVE COOPERATION OF ALL LEBANESE IN THE DIFFICULT TASK OF NATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION. MAJOR ITEM ON SARKIS AGENDA FOR 11 MAY IS JOURNEY TO CALL UPON FRANGIE IN COMPANY WITH PRIMIN KARAME. OUTGOING PRES. HAS ONCE AGAIN TIED HIS DEPARTURE FROM THE SCENE TO RESTORATION OF FULL SECURITY BUT PRESS QUOTES AIDES CLOSE TO FRANGIE AS SETTING MONDAY, 17 MAY, AS THE PROBABLE DATE OF HIS RESIGNATION. ACCORDING TO OUR BEST INFORMATION, SARKIS, WHO HOPES TO LUNCH WITH MARONITE PATRIARCH KHREISH TODAY, MIGHT

PRESS FRANGIE FOR AN IMMEDIIDATE RESIGNATION, BUT THERE ARE EXPECTATIONS THAT FRANGIE WILL COME UNDER PRESSURE FROM OTHER DIRECTIONS, INCLUDING HIS MARONITE ALLIES, TO STEP DOWN WITH SOME DISPATCH.

4. WITH CHARACTERISTIC ENTHUSIASM, MANY LEBANESE POLITICOS HAVE TURNED QUICKLY TO SPECULATION ABOUT THE IDENTITY OF SARKIS' FIRST PRIME MINISTER. WE JUDGE INCOUMBENT KARAME TO BE THE FRONT RUNNER UNLESS HE RUNS INTO STRONG OPPOSITION FROM CHRISTIAN ELEMENTS WHO HAVE BEEN DISSATISFIED WITH HIS PERFORMANCE. SHOULD KARAME SLIP PERSONALLY, HE STILL MAY WIN THE DAY BY INSTALLING HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW AND CONFIDANT, MALEK SALAM, A FORMER MINISTER IN THE RASHID AS SOLH CABINET OF 1974-75. AKKAR DEPUTY SLEIMAN AL 'ALI IS TIPPED AS A VERY DARK HORSE IN THE RACE.

5. SINCE JUMBLATT HAS STILL NOT BEEN BROUGHT INTO THE FOLD, PLANS ARE APPARENTLY UNDER WAY TO CRATE A RIVAL "PROGRESSIVE" GROUP WHICH WOULD BEHAVE IN A MANNER MORE CONGENIAL TO THE DESIRES OF DAMASCUS. ASSEM KANSO, LEADER OF THE PRO-SYRIAN BAATH PARTY, HAS BEEN DELEGATED THE TASK OF FORGING A FRONT INCLUDING THE NASSERITES OF KAMAL SHATILA, THE "DEPRIVED MOVEMENT" LED BY SHIITE IMAM MUSA AS SADR, THE "NATIONAL AWAKENING" OF FORMER CONFIDENTIAL

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PRIMIN ABDULLAH YAFFI, AND POSSIBLY THE REMNATS OF KARAME'S "ARAB LIBERATION PARTY." ALSO TO THE LEFT OF THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM, LT. AHMED KHATIB OF THE LEBANESE ARAB ARMY (LAA) HAS DECLARED THAT HIS GROUP HAS FOUGHT TO CHANGE THE LEBANESE SYSTEM AND NOT RPT NOT MERELY TO ELECT A NEW PRESIDENT. KHATIB WILL, THEREFORE, RESERVE COMMENT ON SARKIS UNTIL THE PRESIDENT-ELECT UNVEILS HIS PROGRAM FOR DEALING WITH DEMANDS FOR EQUALITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE. SINCE WE ARE INFORMED THAT MILITARY OFFICERS ADVISING SARKIS (PARA 2 ABOVE) ARE ALREADY AT WORK ON EFFORTS TO REINTEGRATE LAA ELEMENTS INTO SOME NATIONAL FORCE, KHATIB'S STATEMENT ASSUMES THE QUALITY OF A NEGOTIATION POSITION AND MAY REFLECT AN EFFORT TO LOOSEN FATAH DOMINATION OF HIS FORCE.

6. BEIRUT SPENT UNUSUALLY QUIET NIGHT, ALTHOUGH WE HAVE REPORTS OF LIMITED CLASHES AFTERNOON MAY 10. GREATER CALM MAY REFLECT AT

LEAST TEMPORARY AMELIORATION OF FIGHTING IN THE METN, SCENE OF MAJOR CLASHES OVER THE LAST SEVERAL DAYS. FIGHTING THERE NOW APPEARS TO HAVE SETTLED DOWN TO LIMITED POSITIONAL WARFARE, BUT MARONITE OFFENSIVE COULD STILL RESUME. PARTIAL CEASEFIRE THERE WAS APPARENTLY ARRANGED AS OF 2130 HOURS LOCAL 10 MAY.

7. REDUCTION IN ACTUAL COMBAT IS NOT RPT NOT UNMITIGATED BLESSING HOWEVER, NIGHT 9 MAY, AMERICAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL (ACS) PREMISES WERE ENTERED AND OFFICE AND SPORTS EQUIPMENT STOLEN. CULPRITS APPARENTLY WERE LOCAL ELEMENTS, PROBABLY INCLUDING OUT-OF-WORK "FIGHTERS, AND PROBABLY MOTIVATED BY ANY NUMBER OF REAL OR IMAGINED MISDEMEANORS, SUCH AS FAILURE TO PAY ADEQUATE PROTECTION MONEY. KENNEDY CENTER HAS REOPENED ITS LIBRARY ONLY; MOST OTHER CENTER FUNCTIONS REMAIN SUSPENDED.
LAMBRAKIS

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